



Exploring Themes of Trauma and Female Suffering in *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee

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Abstract— This paper explores the themes of trauma and female suffering in *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee which re tells the story of *The Mahabharata* from Draupadi's point. Unlike the traditional narrative that celebrates the male heroes of the epic, Banerjee's novel highlight the emotional and psychological struggles of a woman who is caught between the battle of selfhood and patriarchal norms. This research examines Draupadi's life long quest for identity, agency and dignity. There is a repetition of trauma in her life, the pattern can be seen in the various incidents of her life like, her birth from fire, her pre decided destiny, her forced marriage with the 5 brothers, her humiliation in the court, her 13-year exile and the death of her loved ones on the battlefield. The incident that took place in the court, where she was disrobed and humiliated in ways no women should be can be seen as a strong symbol of gendered violence and treatment of women as property within the patriarchal structures. At the end, Draupadi emerges not only as a mere victim who suffered in the hands of the patriarchy, rather she emerges as a questioning and resilient figure. She challenges authority along with calling out the injustice that was done to her. Draupadi channels her pain and converts it into her moral strength. The feminist reading of the paper, projects Draupadi as a complex woman who is shaped by desire, anger, love, guilt, and endurance.



Keywords— Female suffering, Feminist reading, Identity, patriarchy and trauma.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Great War is often thought as the war between the rival cousins- The Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Great War is mentioned in the book – *The Mahabharat* by Ved Vyasa. Originally, the story was narrated from the perspectives of the great heroes of that time. The females supporting the heroes are kept aside and are only highlighted when the actions or the emotions of the women has an impact on the lives of the male warriors. The male perspective of the story does not give the readers a chance to have a deeper look at the women's psychology that is also at work during times like war. Through the male voices is it difficult to comprehend the joys and the sorrows, the achievements and the failures, the love and the heartbreaks that were faced by women.

In her book – *The Palace of Illusions* Chitra Banerjee, narrates the story of Mahabharat through the eyes of

Panchaali (Draupadi). In *The Palace of Illusion*, Draupadi is shown as narrating the story of the Great War while highlighting her pain, sorrows, joys, and achievements throughout her life. The story traces Draupadi's roles as a daughter, as a sister, as a wife, as a daughter-in-law, as a mother and as a friend. Chitra Banerjee has beautifully crafted her Draupadi, who is strong and determined to break through the societal norms that restrict women from living a free life. Through Draupadi, Chitra Banerjee has tactfully showcased many problems that are faced by women like quest for identity, male domination, their position in the patriarchal society and discrimination.

The Palace of Illusion By Chitra Banerjee is a revolutionary text, as it empowers the readers especially females. The story enlightens its readers in many ways. This tale is the perfect example to understand love, friendship, the need for a companion and most importantly how women play an

important role in bringing a major change. In the book, Chitra Banerjee has also addressed various social issues like women being the property of her husband, how the society holds an 'ideal image' for every woman and when the woman fails to put herself according to the ideal image she is considered as a bad omen for the family.

Every female should this tale once in their entire lifetime. As Draupadi is the biggest source of inspiration for her readers, she also acts as a guide to life. Her charismatic character reaches its reader's heart to the fullest.

II. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Through Draupadi, Chitra Banerjee has highlighted the quest for identity. At the time of her birth she was given the name 'Draupadi' simply meaning daughter of King Draupad. But she was disappointed as there were prophecies that she would change the course of history, so she always wanted an unique name that made her stand out.

In the novel Chitra Banerjee has beautifully talked about the importance of friendship. Lord Krishna has been shown as a mentor, guide and a friend of Draupadi. Because of Lord Krishna's friendship, Draupadi was able to fight with the hardships she faced throughout her life.

Chitra Banerjee has also talked about phase of self-doubt that a woman undergoes. Since Draupadi was a dark skinned female, she often had doubts about her future. She always thought that her skin colour will become an obstacle between her and her ultimate goal that was pre-decided on her behalf.

In the novel, Chitra Banerjee has also raised the issues regarding females seeking education. For instance when her brother Dhiri was being taught the concepts and notions of warship and morals a Kshatriya should never forget in his life, Draupadi who also wanted to learn sat there behind a curtain, this was not appreciated by the tutor, who never missed a chance to remind her that the highest purpose in her life was to support the warriors in her life.

Importance of the name has been showcased in the novel. Draupadi's dissatisfaction was prominent to the wise. When she went to see the sage in the forest, the sage prophesied her future that brought her stress. According to the prophesy, she would marry five greatest warriors, she will be queen of queens, she will be the cause of the greatest war which will result in the loss of her loved ones, and because of everything she would die all alone. This brought her more stress than before. So as a gift the sage granted her the Name 'Panchaali' meaning the spirit of the land. Finally she got her unique name that meant something to her.

Since her childhood, Draupadi longed for a companion. Even though she was surrounded by many people but the

longing for a friend never dried. With the arrival of Sikhandi, Draupadi thought now she would have a true companion by her side. Sikhandi was a transgender warrior, who had suffered because in the past life she loved a man but due to unfortunate circumstances she was left alone and rejected. Her rejection from every court, led to her suicide. Now in this birth she prayed to god and begged him to make her man so that she can take her own revenge from the society that rejected her. During Sikhandi's stay at Draupadi's father palace, she was embraced with a friendship. Sikhandi as Amba in her past life sets an example for women how and why it is necessary to express their love openly even if it brings distress.

Draupadi is often considered as a rebellious woman. Since her childhood, she thought out of the box. She rejected the feminine interests, and was keen to learn complicated laws of household and property. Since the very beginning she had the urge to prove herself, so she always wanted to learn something new. Her father gave her the freedom to choose the man she wishes to marry, but soon this freedom turned out to be one of the biggest disappointments. As in her swayamvar, the suitors were expected to compete against each other and the winner will be the man to whom she will be married off. The competition was that the suitors had to pierce a fish made of metal, revolving high on the ceiling of the hall, they can't look directly at the target nor can they use their own weapons, they must use the Kindhara bow.

Soon before her swayamvar, a sorceress visited Draupadi who acted like a teacher to her. The sorceress taught her the real life lessons that would help her in future. Draupadi was being taught how she should not desire a man's love, even though that was the one thing she wanted to experience the most. She was also taught that she should know how to control her emotions, in situations where she feels like breaking down. The sorceress also made Draupadi familiar with the stereotypes for women that had their place in the society – the women all round the world where the cause of major problems.

When the royal artist brought the portraits of the suitors who wished to marry Draupadi, she openly voiced her opinions about their looks. When she saw Duryodhan's portrait, Karna's, picture in the same frame captivated her. At that very moment, she wanted to embrace Karna as she felt sympathetic towards those affectionate eyes of Karna. Then finally, when she saw Arjun's portrait, at that very moment she found herself wanting to build a relationship with him. She made her mind that she wanted Arjun win the competition but her choice was opposed by Dhishma.

On the day of her swayamvar, she felt nervous as wedding day and a new married life is a new battle for a woman. The turn of events shocked her the most, as she took a stand for

herself and her brother in front of all the guests. Karna who had come to take part in the competition was a friend of Duryodhan but he did not belong to any ruling lineage. So when her brother Dhri, objected Karna's participation it was Draupadi who came in-between the men to stop them from almost killing each other. She proved her loyalty to her brother by insulting the man she admired the most and wanted to marry.

After the stress full course of events, Draupadi was married to a Brahmin who was able to meet the criteria of the competition but everything happened in a haste that it was difficult to comprehend the situation. While traveling with the Brahmin, to his place of residence Draupadi meet with an accident in which her feet had cuts that produced huge amounts of bloods. At that point when the ignorant Brahmin finally acknowledged her pain, he came to her aid and that's when Draupadi recognized Arjun in his disguise. Finally when she realized that had been married to Arjun she was relived and accepted him as her husband. She hoped that they both could build the relationship she desired.

When she reached, Arjun's place she came to a different world altogether. She had to struggle with her new life as this was not what she was expecting. From a Palace to a hut in the end of the town, her life had taken a reverse turn. Kunti, Arjun's mother had full control of the household. Since the childhood, Kunti has taught the Pandavas to equally share what they have, similarly not knowing what Arjun had brought with him, she asked all five of them share it equally. When she realized it was Draupadi, the wife of her third son, she asked all the other brothers to marry her. Kunti's words sounded like thunderclaps to Draupadi, she hoped that Arjun who was her husband would take a stand for her and oppose his mothers words. But she wrongly judged the situation. As Arjun did take a stand saying that this martial set up was against the notions of Dhrama but he was silenced by his mother. Though Arjun took a stand but for Draupadi it was a disappointment. Kunti not only broke Draupadi's spirits of a marriage with Arjun, she also broke Draupadi's wish to be a good daughter in law with her discouraging taunts. Despite all of this Draupadi managed the situation very tactfully.

Since the Pandavs vauled their mother's orders so much that all of them married Draupadi. The other marriages were against her will as she only wanted to remain married to Arjun but neither her husband took a stand for her nor her father understood the situation. All the men had their own benefits in their mind while negotiating this strange marital arrangement. Vyasa came up with an arrangement in order to maintain harmony in the Pandava household. The arrangement was that she would be wife to each brother for a year at a time, from oldest to youngest, consecutively.

During that, the other brothers were to keep their eyes lowered when speaking to her, better if they did not speak at all. They were not to touch her, not even the tips of her fingers. If they intruded upon their privacy when she and her husband were together, they were to be banished for a year from the household. Vyasa also gave her boon that each time she went to a new brother she would be a virgin again. Draupadi did not liked the boon at all as it was awkward. When the other brothers married Draupadi, Arjun projected his anger as he did not like the idea of sharing his wife but he could not go against his brothers and mother.

Draupadi was welcomed by Bheeshma who was Pandava's grandfather. The warn welcome was something that she had truly desired in her life, as no one had really wanted to welcome her. When she and her husbands were taken to Hastinapur, she still found herself lonely. Her expectations also disappointed her, as she hoped a beautiful palace would be given to her and Yudhisthir but what they were offered could not make a place in her heart.

After Bheeshma was able to give the Pandavas what they truly deserved he was quite happy, moreover Draupadi trusted him with her husband's safety. The region they were given was Khandav, a barren land. The brothers decided to establish their kingdom over their. During the journey from Hastinapur to Khandav, Druapadi realized that Bheem was the generous among all the brothers as he helped her the household courses, even though it was not his year but he believed that Vyasa's arrangement made sense behind the walls of the palace and now that they were wandering so they had to help each other.

The Pandavas and Draupadi finally build their Palace of Illusion, with the help of Maya. Their home was truly beyond imagination. It was beautiful yet magical and gave a sense of home and belonging. All of them were delighted to experience this sense of belongingness. While the Palace was being build, the Pandavas took and respected Draupadi's opinions. It was in this palace only where Draupadi experienced motherhood by giving birth to five sons, one from each. She attached herself to the Palace of Illusion as it was the palace she dreamed of since was a young girl. Her gratitude also grew with time and she was also able to take control of the household.

Even though her husbands took other wives, but their respect and gratitude towards her never changed. It was difficult for her accept the other wives at first, but then she also maturely accepted them. The only time she could not accept was when Arjun married Krishna's sister Subhadra. At first when she met Subhadra she thought that she would never like her as she saw love in Arjun's eyes for Subhadra that she yearned to witness for herself. But over the time she became friends with Subhadra.

When Sage Narad paid his visit to the Pandavas in Indraprastha, he informed them that their father's spirit were in Yama's court instead of Indra's court. Yudhisthir's curiosity rose that why their father was in Yama's court and not Indra's court and what could they do to make sure that the ancestors of the pandavas go to Indra's court. Sage Narad replied to Yudhisthir's curiosity by suggesting them to perform Rajasuya sacrifice. In order to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, the Pandavas had to receive tribute from all the great kings of Bharat, and if the king refused then they had battle against them and defeat them and then the Pandavas should arrange a huge fire ceremony which should be attended by all of them. The Pandavas asked Krishna for his guidance about how they should proceed with the Rajasuya sacrifice. All because of Krishna's help and guidance the Pandavas received tribute. They even invited their cousins the Kauravas. The preparations begin in the Palace of Illusion.

Draupadi wanted to put the past behind and redeem herself for Karna but unfortunately Karna didn't want any such things. Yudhisthir asked Bheeshma to choose a guest of honor as a part of the sacrifice. Bheeshma called Krishna's name as the guest of honor. After Krishna was announced as the guest of honor, Sisupala the king of Chedis objected this and made statements like, "Krishna became a king after killing his own uncle" and "Krishna instigated Bheem to kill Jarasandha." Sisupala's insulting words enraged Bheeshma. Krishna stepped in and said to Sisupala that he had promise him to forgive a hundred insults and Sisupala should apologize to his hosts so that they could complete the sacrifice. Sisupala rebuked Krishna by insulting him further and then Krishna chopped off his head with his chakra. During this entire commotion Draupadi was sacred for Krishna's safety. When Draupadi understood what had happened she was terrified as she thought she had lost her beloved companion but there stood Krishna in front of her with a wounded index finger. Without even thinking Draupadi tore a strip of her sari and bandaged the wound. Soon a chaos broke out as the other kings were protesting and started fighting the Pandavas. Amid the chaos, the Pandavas did not forget their duty towards Draupadi, they made sure that she was safe.

After Sisupala's death, most of the kings had already left. Only Duryodhan and his friends had stayed. Duryodhan was fascinated by the Palace of Illusion. Because of his fascination, Draupadi would find him in unexpected places. The nights in the palace were not appreciated by Draupadi, as the set of cousins would indulge in levels of game of dice, drinking sura, and watching the dancers. During this time Draupadi was not allowed to stay in the sabha. While wandering in the palace, Duryodhan and his men reached the garden that Draupadi had designed herself. In this

garden, there was lake in which Duryodhan fell, he did not receive any help from his men. Watching this from the balcony Draupadi and her maids had a good laughter. But encouraged by Draupadi's smile one of her maids passed a comment, "it seems that the blind king's son is also blind." By this comment the damage was done as Duryodhan and others had seen the ladies. After this incident Draupadi was summoned by Kunti, as she got to know what had been done. Kunti asked Draupadi to inform the incident to Yudhisthir, because Kunti's tone didn't appeal to Draupadi she simply choose not to tell it to anybody. Soon Duryodhan and his men left for Hastinapur. After the departure of the Kauravas, a gloom hanged over the palace and it's residents as Yudhisthir conducted affairs half heartedly, Bheem didn't like the most of the dishes that were made, Arjun watched the mountains listlessly, Nakul neglected his beloved animals, Sahadev left unread his books and Draupadi often stopped mid way of giving instructions. Soon the Pandavas received an invitation from Duryodhan. He wanted his cousins to come and give their blessings to him for his new palace. He even requested that Draupadi should also come as his new wife Bhanumati is keen to meet the queen of queens. The Pandavas were suspicious about the invitation but they decided to go and have a good time with their cousins.

When the Pandavas reached Duryodhan's palace, Draupadi was the first one to notice that the palace was just a replica of their Palace of Illusion only the magic was absent. Bhanumati's visit to Draupadi made her realize that Bhanumati also admired Karna. Duryodhan had organized a family dinner, inviting all his family and closest friends. Bhanumati sought Draupadi's help in order to get ready for the dinner. Bhanumati was eager to make Karna admire her. After helping Draupadi realized that she also had been acting childlike and she had to act like the lady of a fivehold house and the queen of queens. At the dinner, Draupadi had a conversation with Karna that was not at all like the one she had imagined.

Because of the stay in Duryodhan's palace Draupadi was growing irritant and wanted to go back to her beloved palace. Yudhisthir had been enjoying the games and stay but for her sake, he informed that he will ask for leave. Upon hearing that his dearest cousins wishes to go back, Duryodhan challenged Yudhisthir for one last game of dice. The game began and Sakuni took Duryodhan's place as Yudhisthir opponent. The game had turned as Yudhisthir started loosing, he lost his jewels, his weapons and all his personal wealth. Soon he started wager things that were not under his control. Draupadi was resting in her room as she was menstruating and did not feel like doing anything. One of the Duryodhan's attendants was standing at her door, upon witnessing this she was furious as a male servant was

not allowed in the women's quarters. Dharmaditya entered her room panting, begin saying things like, "terrible things had happened" Draupadi could not understand what was going on. She asked the attendant to leave them alone, but he informed her that Duryodhan had invited Draupadi to the sabha. She was shocked as women were not allowed there and why did not her husbands called her. Then Dharmaditya informed her that Yudhishthira had lost everything in gambling from the palace to his brothers and even himself, and then he had wagered Draupadi, and unfortunately lost her as well. It took time for Draupadi to understand what had happened, but she remembered a law that 'the wife is the property of the husband but if the husband was not free himself then he had no jurisdiction over his wife.' She sent the servant back and asked him to ask the elders that, 'if Yudhishthira was Duryodhan's property so he had no right to wager Draupadi?' Annoyed by this Dussasana came storming into her room and grabbed Draupadi by her hair saying, 'that Duryodhan was her master now and she must obey his orders.' He dragged her to the sabha by pulling her by her hair. Draupadi found herself in the middle of the sabha filled with men and their glances towards her, she was helpless and begged for help from her husbands who could not do anything, all the elder members sat there but did not do anything to help her. Duryodhan insulted her by asking her to come and sit on his lap. Duryodhan asked Dussasana to remove all the jewels from the Pandavas, they removed everything themselves even before Dussasana could touch them. Karna pointed to Draupadi and said, "why should she be treated differently, take her cloths off too." Dussasana started pulling her sari, even though Draupadi stood there naked but he could not completely strip her off from her cloths, as the more he pulled the more fabric appeared. While this was going on, she closed her eyes and imagined as if she was in garden with Krishna. The nature around her was calming and soothing, taking her away from the sabha where she was being humiliated. Krishna had said to her that, "no one can shame her, if she didn't allow it." These words by Krishna came to her as a wave of amazement and she was not scared anymore. When she opened eyes, she found herself still clothed and Dussasana on the floor. She stepped over him and cursed the kauravas that no kaurava will be alive to sit on the throne and to offer prayers to the dead. And she took an oath of not combing her hair until she would bathe them in kaurava blood.

The Pandavas lost the last the game of dice and as a result, they were sent to exile for 13 years. In the first 12 years they had to live in the forest and in the last year they had to hide themselves in disguise if caught by Duryodhan, then they would have to live in the forest for another 12 years. Draupadi choose to company her husbands to the forest, leaving behind her 5 boys. After the Pandavas left,

Duryodhan and his men rode towards the Palace of Illusion. Draupadi's beloved palace lost its existence even before Duryodhan could touch it. After the loss of the palace Draupadi's desire to belong somewhere was back again. Even during their exile Duryodhan did not stop his tactics to bring troubles for the Pandavas, one such incident when he sent sage Durvasa to the Pandavas. Durvasa and his hundred disciples visited the Pandavas and asked them to offer food. Unfortunately, the Pandavas were out of food, this brought Draupadi great distress but Krishna was there to her rescue. It was Krishna who helped her in this situation, using his magic. Another time Duryodhan had brought distress for the Pandavas as he incited Jayadratha to abduct Draupadi from the forest.

During their exile the Pandavas had many visitors. Draupadi's brother Dhishma had tried his best to lessen their difficulties. When Draupadi meet her 5 sons again, she realized that there was a disconnection between her and her sons. Dhishma wanted her to go back with him but Draupadi refused, as she wanted to stay by her husbands.

Arjun was growing restless to fight the war. He wanted to restore Draupadi's and his honor. So he announced that he would go to the mountains of Himavan and would try to please lord Shiva through great penance, so he gets the Pushpata the divine astra. Indra Arjun's father invited him to court. There the court dancer Urvashi fell in love with Arjun and wanted him to marry her. But Arjun had denied her proposal, so she cursed Arjun that he would have to live a life of eunuch for a year.

After their exile ended the Pandavas were supposed to live their life hidden and if discovered then they would have to live in the forest for another 12 years. So they decided that they would do odd jobs in the palace of King Virat which was situated in Matsya. Draupadi would be Queen Sudeshna's attendant, Bheem would help in the royal kitchen, Yudhishthira was in the court as Brahmin who had excelled in philosophic conversations and game of dice, Nakul and Sahadev would work in barns and Arjun would be Princess Uttara's dance tutor. In Virat's palace, Draupadi caught the attention of Keechak, Sudeshna's brother, who wanted her at any cost to fulfill his sexual desires. A month before the disguise ended Keechak cornered and threatened Draupadi that she should come to him on her own otherwise he will take her by force. She ran to the court hoping that king Virat would give her justice but she was wrong. In court she found herself helpless as Keechak kicked her. Yudhishthira witnessed this but the fear of exposure stopped him from helping her or protesting against the injustice. And because of this Draupadi was disheartened. Forgetting that if discovered they would have to return back to the forest, Draupadi went to see Bheem after the palace fell quiet and

asked him to kill Keechak. The next day Bheem killed Keechak and this news travelled quickly. When it reached Duryodhan, he was sure that it was Bheem who had killed Keechak, to find it out whether it was true or not. He attacked Virat's kingdom from both sides. The Pandavas fought the Kauravas for king Virat. Soon it was out that the disguised men were indeed the Pandavas, and their year of disguise had also ended. King Virat offered his daughter Uttara to Arjun, but Arjun suggested that Uttara should be married to his son Abhimanyu.

Soon the preparations for the Great War begin. Duryodhan and Arjun both went to see Krishna and ask for his help. In Dwarka Arjun and Duryodhan stood face to face in Krishna's room where he was taking a nap. Arjun asked Krishna to be there in the war as his friend where as Duryodhan asked for Krishna's soldiers. Draupadi dreamt about the conversation that took place between Karna and Kunti.

When Draupadi had arrived at Kurukshetra, even though she was tired from the journey but she was equally excited to see the battlefield. Upon seeing Arjun take care of Subhadra, Draupadi longed for his tenderness towards her. Even the women were made familiar with the rules of the war. When it was dark, and all of them decided to go back to their tents, Vyasa appeared in front of Draupadi and gave her a gift, the power to witness what going on the battle field.

With the ongoing war between the cousins internal conflict played its game on the minds of the warriors, like when Bheem killed Duryodhan's brothers he was conflicted by the thought of fratricide as he shared the same blood, Yudhishthir's confused heart did not want the war to take place, Arjun the greatest of all was also conflicted by the thought of killing his beloved grandfather and his teacher who had made him the greatest of all. Vyasa had gifted Draupadi a sight that would allow her to witness the major events of the war, as she would be the only one left to narrate the tale of the Great War. She preferred to call this gift as 'trance', as when the sight was at work she was dragged to a different world. Because of the sight she was able to see the events that occurred and she could even read the minds of the people. Draupadi was surprised to see such a miserable Arjun. He had a shaken mental state, as he was not ready for what was about to happen, he was the one who wanted the war at any cost for his and Draupadi's honour. During such times, it was Krishna's advice that motivated the Pandavas. Krishna's advice to the Pandavas, left Draupadi in great conflict as he advised them, "the pleasures that from sense-objects are bound to end, and thus they are only sources of pain. Don't get attached to them. And: when a man reaches a state where honor and dishonor are alike to

him, then he is considered supreme." Draupadi was conflicted as she did not know a way to live without attachment.

Bheeshma as a great warrior, and was becoming a great problem for the Pandavas and their army. The Pandava army saw Bheeshma as Yama the death-bringer because even at this age he fought the army single handedly. On the ninth day the duel between Arjun and Bheeshma broke out, due to his love for the grandfather Arjun's heart was not in the duel. All the arrows Arjun shot towards Bheeshma were a waste as Arjun aimlessly targeted. Whereas all the arrows shot by Bheeshma towards Arjun, hit him. To stop this Krishna had to interfere by stopping Bheeshma because of Krishna's interference Arjun changed his mind that next day he would face Bheeshma as a true Kshatriya keeping aside everything that had been stopping him. At night on Krishna's advice, the Pandavas went to visit their grandfather without any weapon. And he out of love for the Pandavas told them how he could be defeated. Next day as Arjun had said, he faced Bheeshma. He had dropped his weapons as he saw that Sikhandi was with Arjun and never picked them up again. Arjun shot arrows after arrows towards Bheeshma and all of them hit him. After Bheeshma fell on the ground, Arjun shot three more arrows so that the grandfather could rest his head. Bheeshma did not die but he no longer was a participant in the war. Because he was a charismatic warrior, participants from both the sides came to him for advice and to share their secrets that could not have been shared openly. Draupadi knew that he had visitors at night as well, because she was one of them. She had gone to him to ask that one question that had troubled her for so long, "why didn't he say anything when she was being humiliated in his court?" When she went to him it was quite late in the night, she had thought that at this hour, no one would be there with Bheeshma, but she was wrong as she found Karna there. Because of the admiration, she held for Karna she stayed there in order to listen what he had to say to grandfather. Since Draupadi was eavesdropping on their conversation she learned the truth about Karna. She got to know that Karna was a brother to her husbands, he is Kunti's son whom she had abandoned after birth because when she had him she was very young. Bheeshma knew the truth about his birth, in order to stop the war he asked Karna to join the Pandavas. He had firmly refused the proposal because he was honour bound. He said to grandfather that he had eaten Duryodhan's salt so he could not betray his dearest friend, and he had to repay the eaten salt in the form of blood. Surprises did not end for Draupadi, as she also learned that since the day of her swayamvar Karna had admired her. He had even regretted instigating Dussasan to humiliate her by pulling her sari. Further she also learned that, Kunti had told

him that he would be the king if he joined her sons which did not give him any kind of temptation but Kunti had also offered Draupadi to him. The thought of having Draupadi in his life, Karna wanted to give up his honour, reputation and join his brothers but it took him great effort to not submit himself to the temptation. This admiration was all that Draupadi had ever wished for, she thought it was of no use now because her husbands would take their revenge for her honour's sake. But the truth about Karna's admiration came with more anger towards Kunti. She was infuriated because Kunti had offered her to Karna as if she was some kind of a slave girl. After Arjun had shot Bheeshma, at the night Pandavas only spoke about Karna, now who was allowed to participate in the war. It was a difficult time for Kunti as now she had to witness her own sons killing each other. Before finishing the dinner she left saying that her joints were stiff causing her great difficulties. Seeing Kunti like this something in Draupadi changed, she went to her room and willingly asked for the permission to apply a paste that would lessen the joint pains. And for the first time she had acted as a daughter-in-law.

After Bheeshma, Drona took control of the Kaurava army as their commander. While commanding the army and preparing himself for the role he was about to play, Drona was conflicted. The sight took Draupadi inside Drona's mind. His mind was conflicted by the thoughts that he should have left the Kaurava court long ago and returned to a life of austerities. What stopped him was his love for his son Aswattama, as he developed a fondness for lavish living. It was because of his son he had stayed, promising himself that one day he would leave the court, but now it was too late to have such kind of thoughts. As his teacher, Drona had promised to Arjun that he would be the greatest of all. This promise had taken a backseat when the Pandavas encountered Ekalavya in the forest. During a hunt, the Pandavas crossed paths with Ekalavya, who had shut Arjun's hunting dog in such a manner that it had truly surprised them. The way Arjun's dog was shot, he himself could never have shot like that. After witnessing this, Drona had enquired about Ekalavya's guru. Ekalavya had taken Drona's name. Then Drona, remembered that a boy from the hill tribe had come to him, as wanted to learn archery, but Drona had refused because he did not want to teach a lowborn. Since then Ekalavya has been practicing in the forest considering Drona as his teacher. Upon seeing this Arjun, was in disbelief that a self-taught man was finer than him, Drona sensed Arjun's thoughts and asked Ekalavya for guru dakshina. As guru dakshina, Drona asked Ekalavya his right thumb. Without hesitation Ekalavya offered Drona what he had asked for, Drona's promise to Arjun remained unhindered. Ghatotkacha, Bheem's son with Hidimba had proved to be a great warrior like his father and his uncles.

Since he was a rakshasa, a being of the night his powers increased by the end of the day. The Kaurava army found it difficult to fight with him, witnessing this Duryodhan was horrified. He ordered Karna to do whatever he could in order to stop Ghatotkacha. Karna knew that only the Shakti astra would be able to destroy Ghatotkacha, but he was saving the astra to use it against Arjun. However, since Duryodhan had ordered him, he had to kill Ghatotkacha using the astra. On the battlefield, when the Ghatotkacha saw the speeding missile making its way towards him, he grew to an immense size, when the astra touched him and exploded his chest, he fell in such a manner where he would have killed many enemies. The news of Ghatotkacha's death brought distress to the Pandavas as he was their first child to die in the war. Bheem was shaken and devastated, as now he had to arrange the funeral rites for his own son. Since the very beginning Drona was aware that he could not defeat the Pandavas in an open battle, he had to use different strategies. Drona thought of capturing Yudhishthira in order to put an end to the war but this was not possible with Arjun beside his brother. So in order to capture Yudhishthira, Drona would pursue different kings to challenge Arjun, so in order to fight his challenger Arjun would leave his brother and that moment could be used to capture Yudhishthira. But every time Arjun returned just in time, and would protect his brother. Seeing his plan fail, on the thirteenth day Drona came up with a different strategy, he formed his army into the most devastating and invincible formation known as the Padma Vyuh- it shaped like a thousand-petalled lotus that can only be destroyed from the inside. From the Pandavas it was Arjun, who knew how to destroy the formation from the inside but he was taken away, after him, it was his son Abhimanyu, but he did not know how to come out of the formation. Upon seeing such a formation, the Pandavas had to request Abhimanyu to enter the formation first, promising to follow him from behind. When Abhimanyu got ready he saluted his uncles and went straight towards the Kaurava army. As soon as Abhimanyu entered the formation, it locked up leaving the Pandavas outside. Jayadrath stood with the lock guarding it and preventing the Pandavas to enter in order to help their nephew. Inside the formation, Abhimanyu realized that he had been doomed. He was a great warrior like his father, even when his death was near he wanted to fight his enemies with honour. The rules of the war broken, as the Kaurava men attacked him from back, they cut the string of his bow and the hilt from his sword, his charioteer and his horses were smashed. As they approached him, Abhimanyu requested them to fight him one by one, but the Kaurava men would not honour his last request. As he fell on the ground disbelief took over him that such so-called great heroes have turned into murderers. The death of their second child had brought

great distress on the Pandavas. Abhimanyu's wife, Uttara called death to come her, his uncles felt guilty for pushing him so much and all of them wished it were they who should have died instead of him. When Arjun learned about the death of his son, he fell down, scaring everyone around him that he would perish of sorrow. Krishna consoled Arjun, and reminded him that his son died nobly and Arjun should be a worthy father to him. For the sake of his son's honour Arjun took an oath to kill Jayadrath, who prevented his brothers from entering the formation, and if he fails to do so he would commit suicide. Sitting on the hill alone, Draupadi was contemplating the entire situation, while doing so she started weeping for Abhimanyu. She was tensed because of the fear that what would happen if Arjun failed to fulfil his promise. She had realized that she had pushed the Pandavas too much. And, finally she wept for Karna, who lost his honour today by killing a defenceless boy. The war rules being broken, the unarmed were attacked, later these actions were justified also. Great warriors like the Pandavas and even Krishna broke the rules of the war. Krishna created a fake sunset, so Jayadrath would feel that he is safe in those moments only Arjun beheaded him and fulfilled his promise. Even Drona broke all the rules of the war as he commanded his army to attack the Pandava army in night when they were resting, he even got Draupadi's father and Dhri's son killed in order to break Dhri's spirits. Drona as a warrior was being a great cause of distress to the Pandavas, in order to stop him Bheem killed an elephant named Aswatthama. The Pandavas told him the news, but at first he didn't believe it. He wanted to hear the same from Yudhishthir, as he was a man who never lied in his life. In order to fight and save the men who had come to fight for him, Yudhishthir lied and told Drona that Bheem had killed his son. The war had forced a man like Yudhishthir to give up on his virtues. Upon hearing the news of his son's death, Drona dropped his weapons and sat in prayer, Dhri took advantage of the situation and beheaded his own teacher. By killing Drona, Dhri fulfilled his faith, but lost himself.

After Drona, Karna took the post of the commander for the Kaurava army, as a commander he urged both sides to return to righteousness as he reapplied all the rules of the war that were broken. He regretted his part in Abhimanyu's death, and could not kill the Pandavas as he was fighting his own brothers. He spared Sahadev, Nakul, Bheem and Yudhishthir, when he had them at his mercy, for once he was disloyal to his friend and his king Duryodhan. Before letting go, he taunted the Pandavas in order to prevent any kind of suspicion. While facing his brothers in the battlefield Karna faced many internal conflicts because the Pandavas were facing an enemy while he was facing his own brothers. Karna as a leader was really admired by the common soldiers. As he had reapplied the rules of the war, now the

common soldiers were a little relaxed as no major astra would be used against them. Karna even walked with the soldiers, after the sun set at night, he offered solace to the wounded and made sure they were given what comfort was available. He would motivate the soldiers who would go to fight in the morning and he would also promise them that whoever won Yudhishthir or Duryodhan would take care of their family. On the seventeenth day Arjun and Karna stood facing each other, their duel was the most waited one. Everything around them had stopped, everyone wanted to experience the most enigmatic duel. Draupadi had been scared of this duel as the two men whom she adored faced each other. Whoever won this duel whether Arjun or Karna, she will have to experience the pain of losing her beloved. Because of the sight, gifted to her by Vyasa she could see the duel very clearly, and wanted the sight to go away, as she did not have the heart to watch the two men she loved fight each other. This duel had caused more pain to her than the entire war. Pandavas's uncle Salya, drove Karna's Chariot towards Arjun, while driving the chariot he was parsing Arjun in order to break Karna's confidence. While facing Arjun, Karna had a calm face because in his heart he knew that he could not defeat Arjun without Shakti and he was facing his younger brother in the battlefield. As a true warrior and a friend, he gave the war what he had. The two warriors, neutralized each other arrows and astras. Krishna had to intervene and bring both the warriors to ground. The sun was about set, this gave a lot of relief to Draupadi because once the sun was set, and the duel had to stop there. And if the duel stopped, Draupadi would get a chance to tell the truth about Karna to her husbands. As everyone waited for the commanders to give the signal to withdraw, Karna's chariot tilted sideways as one of the wheels was embed in earth. Karna realized what was happening; the Brahmin's curse was taking its place. He was helpless and death waited for him in the corner. He asked Arjun to give him a chance to ready himself for the sake of code of honour. It was Krishna, who played with Arjun's mind at that moment. Krishna urged Arjun not to think about the code of honour; he reminded Arjun that it was Karna who had instigated Dussasan to humiliate Draupadi in the royal court. With the flashbacks of that terrible incident, rage flashed in Arjun's eyes but he hesitated, because he didn't want people to remember him as a warrior who killed an unarmed opponent. Krishna very well knew what will put Arjun into action, then he used the memory of Abhimanyu's death as a weapon to put Arjun into action. Arjun was reminded that Karna butchered his son while he was fighting five other men. The memory of his dead son was enough for Arjun to take action that was required at that moment. While facing his hated enemy, he raised his bow. Karna began to chant mantra that would bring him any weapon but it failed.

Parasuram's curse was taking its effect, Karna's knowledge failed. Arjun released his arrow, and shot Karna. Before arrow touched Karna he smiled. Arjun kept his promise to Draupadi and had killed Karna. Karna's death brought great internal conflict for Draupadi. As she sat there on the hill, her heart and mind was muddled with conflicting thoughts. Part of her was glad that the unbearable tension was over, part of her was relieved that her husband had won, part of her realized that the Pandavas were close to achieving the vengeance she had carved though now it gave her no satisfaction. Sorrow and regret had took their control over Draupadi, she was full of sorrow as a noble soul had died on the battle field. She was taken back to the day of her swayamvar, where she had thrown daggers at Karna by asking about his birth, and prohibiting him from competing. She thought to herself, what would have happened if Karna had won the competition that day. Draupadi was heartbroken as her beloved died believing that, she did not love him, she wished to change things.

After Karna's death it seemed as if Draupadi had lost interest in the war, she did not had the will to climb the hill, but to avoid any kind of suspicion she climbed the hill and lied there. The Pandavas hoped that after Karna's death the war would end but Duryodhan refused to give up. Through the sight Draupadi saw the destruction of the Kauravas, she saw how Yudhisthir killed their uncle Salya with the help of his javelin. After killing his uncle, Yudhisthir was burdened with further guilt because while dying their uncle had send them his blessings. At the Kaurava end, now only four warriors were alive: Duryodhan, Kripa, Kritavarma and Aswatthama. At Samantapanchaka lake, the Pandavas found Druyodhan resting underwater. Since Yudhisthir was a man who respect the code of honour, he asked Duryodhan to choose an opponent and the weapon he would like to have a duel with. From the Pandavas it was only Bheem who was capable of fighting Duryodhan. This act of Yudhisthir, made Krishna furious and he began to remind Yudhisthir how foolish his act was. Krishna reminded him that millions of men had died in order to save the Pandavas especially Yudhisthir, his brothers had faced greatest dangers in order to save his life, Draupadi had wept and prayed for this moment for through thirteen years of hardship and humiliation, and how he himself had manipulated dharma for the Pandavas. Krishna also informed Yudhisthir that Duryodhan learned gada – yuddha from his brother Balaram. Duryodhan picked Bheem in order to have a duel, as he believed that no other Pandava could fight him. When the duel began, the Pandavas realized that Duryodhan was extremely good in gada-yuddha. The spies, who had worked for the Pandavas, had informed them that Duryodhan had ordered his armorers to make him an iron statue of Bheem so that he could practice

on it. The duel stretched over one to two hours, Bheem was tired and exhausted and could not fight Duryodhan with his entire strength. Seeing Bheem lose the Pandavas remembered that Gandhari had asked Druyodhan to come and visit her while he was completely naked but out of modesty he wore a loincloth. When Gandhari saw her son, she undid her blindfold and sent the powers of her penances into his body. The duel was going out of the Pandavas' hands, when Krishna guided Bheem through Arjun. During the fight when Bheem caught Arjun's eyes, he slapped his thigh indicating him to hit Duryodhan near his thigh. The gesture was very familiar to all the Pandavas, as it was the same gesture that Duryodhan did when Draupadi was humiliated in his court and the Pandavas were his captive. As Bheem had taken an oath to take revenge for Draupadi's humiliation, he hitted Duryodhan on his thighs and fulfilled his oath. The duel was over, the Pandavas had won the battle of Kurukshetra and the Kaurava prince was placed on his deathbed. But Bheem's actions had enraged Krishna's brother Balaram, because he had broken one of the most important rules of the gada – yuddha. That was hitting Duryodhan below his navel. Upon hearing the news of Duryodhan's death, Balaram came to the battlefield and wanted to kill Bheem, it was Krishna who stopped Balaram from killing Bheem. But before Balaram left, he told Bheem that Duryodhan will be glorified and remembered as the best of fighters. Bheem stood there and said that, he stand by his action and he did it for Yudhisthir whom Druyodhan had cheated of his heritage and for Draupadi whom he insulted the way no women should ever be. The Pandavas had to follow the ancient laws at night, the male members of the family had to stay in a different place and away from the female members of the family. Draupadi longed to join them all, her husbands, Krishna, her brothers and her sons. She wanted to hold her boys close to her heart and believe that all her boys had survived the terrors of the war. She promised to herself that from now she would be a better mother, giving the attention they desired for so many years. While preparing the feast, Draupadi thanked the god for saving all the men she had loved except one. She considered herself more fortunate than Subhadra, Uttara, Kunti, Hidimba, Gandhari but then reality took its place in her mind that she was one of the major causes behind this destruction and she should not be so lucky.

After going to the bed, Draupadi saw a dream where she saw herself transformed into a male warrior. As the night slept, the warrior walked across a barren plain to a broken body. It was the, Kaurava prince on his deathbed, the warrior promised him revenge. The warrior was alone, without any army, chariot or a mentor to guide him. The three men, the warrior and his two companions wanted to rest, but the looming agony did not allow the warrior to rest.

While being restless, the warrior silently watched the owl the death harbinger kill the sleeping crows in their nest. Upon witnessing this, the warrior knew what he had to do. The warrior woke up his companions, shared his plan with them. They thought he had gone mad and tried to calm Aswatthama but he was satisfied after seeing the horror in their eyes. He reminded his companions about the oath that had made to their prince. Upon seeing this dream, Draupadi woke up restlessly, and started screaming and thrashing. Seeing her like this, her attendants called the other queens. Kunti and Subhadra thought that Draupadi was possessed by evil spirit, Kunti burned red chillies and Subhadra splashed water on Draupadi and chanted prayers, but everything failed. Draupadi could not calm herself, and ran to the guards and ordered for a chariot. When Draupadi reached the Pandava camp, where all the men had gone to rest after their victory. She saw the camp was ablaze, as servants were dragging out bodies. Dhri's charioteer was brought to Draupadi and he informed her that, Aswatthama had crept into the camp and overpowered her sleeping brother and when Dhri had asked him to give a chance die fighting. Aswatthama had laughed a maniac's laugh and had strangled Dhri. As Dhri begged him to kill him with a weapon and give him a chance to die as a warrior. Aswatthama had mocked Dhri by saying that no death is more fitting than this for a man who killed his own guru, when he had dropped his weapons. By the time the men in the tent realized that Aswatthama was in the tent, he had already killed Sikhandi and all five sons of Draupadi. She refused to understand what she heard from the servant. Silently she walked around the bodies and then sat beside Dhri's body placing his head on her lap, she asked for her children and Sikhandi to be placed near her. Seeing her beloveds lying there motionless, she thought how unfortunate she was even after her husband has won the war yet she had lost her brothers and all five of her sons. Her body and mind refused to believe what she saw and touched, her mind took her back to the past where she was a young girl in Kampilya. Listening to what Dhri's tutor taught him, discussing the war rules with him in their father's palace. Remembering the day when Sikhandi walked down that corridor to meet her. How Sikhandi had told Draupadi about their life as Amba. Draupadi did not want to come out of her trance but a flute was calling her out of her trance, when she opened her eyes she saw Krishna gently rubbing his hands over her face. Krishna advised Draupadi, to be strong and also told her about the nature of war that even as a winner there are a lot of responsibilities waiting for the Pandavas. He also informed that he and Arjun should go to protect Bheem, who went after Aswatthama. The Pandavas found Aswatthama by the Ganga, where he fought with Arjun. When it was clear that

he could not defeat Arjun, Aswatthama called upon the terrible astra – Brahmasheershastra and cursed it, "may the earth be rid of the seed of the Pandavas." Arjun countered it by sending an astra, at this point Vyasa had to interfere and remind the two warriors about their responsibilities towards the earth-goddess. As instructed by Vyasa Arjun called back astra but Aswatthama failed to take back his weapon. The damage had been done, as the weapon made its way towards the women's tent where Uttara was resting. The women were in frenzy seeing the sky that was burning and made the air too hot to breathe. Without thinking for once, Subhadra threw herself in front of Uttara, who was carrying the only hope of Pandavas, Subhadra called Krishna for help. The magic of life, saved all of them, and Parikshit, Abhimanyu's son was born. After fighting Aswatthama, Bheem returned with a precious and fabled jewel that was the highest possession of Aswatthama. He had this jewel set in his forehead during the golden days of life, it had the power to protect its wearer from weapons disease and hunger. Bheem had brought this jewel, and presented it to Draupadi thinking it would make her happy. But because of the tragedy she had recently faced, this jewel did not appeal to her. She wanted to get rid of the jewel but Bheem had fought for it, so in order to make him happy she gave it to Yudhishthir, so he could place it on his crown and wear it as the king of Hastinapur. Yudhishthir accepted the gift from Draupadi, only to make her happy. The war had brought gloom over the Pandavas, this made Draupadi realize that the future that was waiting for the Pandavas was not something that they had hoped for. Draupadi thought that this is how the Pandavas would live the rest of their lives, trying to make each other happy by doing small gestures. As her mind wandered, she thought of what Duryodhan said to Yudhishthir while dying that, Yudhishthir had to rule a kingdom full of widows and orphans whereas he would enjoy the pleasures of the heaven.

After the war ended, the Pandavas moved in the battlefield, to pay respect to the dead. The sight of the battlefield was terrible, as the corpses of the soldiers who had died produced a rotten smell. The Chandaals who were responsible for cremating set up the funeral pyres on the battlefield and did their job effortlessly. While witnessing all this Draupadi, saw white emotionless creatures approaching them from the far end of the battlefield. Soon she realized that these emotionless creatures were the widows who had travelled from Hastinapur, Indra Prastha and many other corners of Bharat. The condition of these women shocked the Pandavas. The bodies of the common soldiers, were completely destroyed and unrecognizable. The weeping widows realized that they will not be able to view their beloved for one last time, they grew frenzied. The women called curses on Draupadi's husband, others tried

to kill themselves, some threw themselves onto the pyres. Upon seeing this, Draupadi realized that Duryodhan's last words were taking their place. Yudhisthir ordered his guards to stop them from harming themselves and bring them to him. As they didn't trust Yudhisthir because it was he who was responsible for their husbands' death, they tried to run away, call their dead husband's spirit to save them. The guards had to take force in their hands in order to control the women. When the women were brought in front of Yudhisthir, he assured them that there was nothing to fear and they would not suffer the evils of a defeated city. His words acted as triggers and failed to calm the distressed women; upon hearing his words they called death upon them. As his words sounded a like charity, they refused to believe him and asked Yudhisthir to kill them as well and save them from the bleakness of widowhood. Moreover, if he could not kill them himself then he should allow them an honourable death on their husband's pyres. The women ran away from the dais towards the pyres, the Pandavas feared if nothing was done soon, then the lifeless battlefield will witness a mass suicide. Seeing the women like this, brought more gloom on the Pandavas, because none of them knew what to do had it been a war that they had to fight, all of them would have done their best. Draupadi's pity grew for Yudhisthir, as this mass suicide at the beginning of his reign will be a stain on his kingship, to her he looked so alone, that's why she climbed the dais just to stand beside her husband. But the Pandavas were surprised when they saw that the women stopped running and stood still in front of Draupadi and Yudhisthir. When the women stopped, Draupadi's mind was muddled with thoughts and various kinds of questions like did these women know her story, did they think that she deserved everything that had happened to her? Draupadi stood there without saying any word, she did not even weep because after her sons had died her eyes refused to allow tears. She hesitated, as she had never addressed an audience, but then she started addressing the women. She mentioned the bereavement that all of them shared as she too had lost a father and brothers to the war, she confessed her guilt for bringing the war and asked for forgiveness. Then she started to speak about the children who were there and needed care more than earlier, while talking about the children something in her broke and she found it difficult to continue. Draupadi reminded the women that they still had children waiting for them to return, and they had to live for the sake of the future. She promised them to take care of their children as her own because the war had left her childless. Draupadi addressed her audience as a mother who lost all her hopes for the future and not as a queen would have addressed her subjects. It was Draupadi's responsibility to help her husbands, find the bodies of their people. She wanted to

forget, everything she had witnessed during the 18 days of the war. With the help of Draupadi, the Pandavas were able to find Ghatotkacha, Uttara, Virata and Abhimanyu's body, while pointing towards the bodies Draupadi silently thanked everyone for their contribution to the war. As the Pandavas proceeded, dilemma played its game on Draupadi, as she was confused as which of the dead should they leave. She remembered how Salya uncle to the Pandavas helped them even though he was fighting the war for Duryodhan, Drona it was him who had taught the Pandavas how to hold their bows, made Arjuna the greatest of all, Lakshmana Kumar Duryodhan's son who reminded Draupadi of her own sons. As they approached Karna's body, Draupadi's heart could not bear it, but for the sake of her husbands, she showed no emotion. While looking at Karna's body, Draupadi's mind wandered everywhere as she thought that there was no one to mourn this great warrior, Kunti could not claim her kinship with him and she herself could not show any grief for him. Her husbands mocked Karna, Nakul questioned that why his corpses didn't give a stench? Arjuna glorified Karna as a warrior realizing that it is easy to praise someone when you have already killed them and then Yudhisthir thought about the parents to whom such a great warrior belonged to and were they aware that their son is no more there. Upon hearing her husbands, her heart did not obey her and she started to show emotions, then sternly she reminded her husbands that they should cremate every warrior who died in Kurukshetra with due honour. To which Yudhisthir agreed and called for arrangements to be made. Dhritrashtra stopped Yudhisthir saying that the Pandavas should not touch his sons whom they have killed. When Draupadi saw Gandhari, she was scared as she thought of Gandhari causing harm to her husbands. Yudhisthir being the man of virtue, rushed to the old couple standing in front of them and apologised, promising them that he had been a son to them. The old king pretended to accept his apologies. When he called out for Bhishma, who had killed all of his sons, Krishna stopped Bhishma and asked his servants to bring out the iron statue, which Duryodhan had ordered for himself in order to vent his hatred. It was Krishna who pointed out that the Pandavas were forced into this war and were cheated by Duryodhan, then he asked the old king to truly forgive the Pandavas. The old king obeyed what Krishna asked him to do, but while giving blessings to the Pandavas something in him broke as he realized that now he had to live a life that was granted by the sons of his brother, from that day onwards he spoke less, ate only one meal and never entered the sabha again. Gandhari was wiser and knew that her sons had brought their own downfall, but at the end of the day she was a mother and her pain was enough to enrage her. When Yudhisthir touched her feet, her rage manifested as fire, which burned his fingernails.

Krishna pulled him away from her, and then she showered her rage upon him. Out of rage, she cursed that Krishna's clan would also destroy in the span of a single day and the women of Dwarka would also weep the way the women of Hastinapur were weeping. To which Krishna replied, that all things must end one day and his own clan is also included in this. But then he questioned Gandhari about how she indulged Duryodhan in the wrong things, how she let her own brother influence her son? and then he made her realize that Duryodhan broke his word again and again. Upon hearing Krishna, she realized what she had done, and asked for forgiveness, and wanted to call back her curse. Krishna smiled and consoled her. As Pandavas were ready to cremate their children, Kunti approached them, her eyes were bleak and her voice was quite. She asked the Pandavas to begin the ceremony by paying respect to their eldest brother, and then finally she had the courage to accept her kinship with Karna, this revelation startled Draupadi's husbands.

After the war, cremations, offerings to the Ganga gloom and depression took complete control of Yudhishthir. He didn't leave the river bank for weeks, as he sat by the Ganga he thought about the land which was so devastated that nothing will grow on it, about the millions who died on this lifeless land. Amid of these thought, the death of his brother- Karna troubled him the most. Draupadi stay with him during those weeks, as she did not wanted him be alone in such a phase. The thought that he asked Arjun to kill his own brother, broke something in Yudhishthir and guilt played its game on his mind. He remembered the day when Arjun killed Karna, how happy it had made him and how Karna had spared his life along with his brothers. Seeing Yudhishthir mourn his brother's death, Draupadi regretted that she had kept the truth hidden if she could have informed the Pandavas, then Yudhishthir would have been saved by the sins of fratricide. Yudhishthir was heartbroken, because Kunti had broken his trust and now he found it difficult to trust his own mother. Draupadi felt bad for Yudhishthir as well as Kunti, then she reminded Yudhishthir that he should not judge his mother, who was helpless at the time of Karna's birth and even at the time when he fell on the battlefield. Draupadi and her husbands took Yudhishthir to Bheeshma thinking that a philosophical discussion would heal him, but the control of gloom was so strong that even a conversation with grandfather could not pull him out of his melancholy. Then it was Krishna who played the cards of responsibility and duty for Yudhishthir, as he informed that bandits were terrorizing the helpless subjects. This led Yudhishthir to return to Hastinapur and to be crowned. The palace that once belonged to Duryodhan was also in despondence, and the Pandavas did not get any glimpses of pleasure. Draupadi ordered her servants to drop their mourning cloths and wear

clothes for Yudhishthir's coronation, pull down the dusted drapes in order to get the palace ready for the big day. The palace was the house where Draupadi would live the rest of her life, the war had brought back her longing for a home where she would belong. On the day of the coronation, the Pandavas found it difficult to enter the sabha again, as their hearts and minds were flooded with memories of the day when Draupadi was humiliated. It was Krishna, who saved the Pandavas from further melancholy. Post war Hastinapur was mainly a city of women, as now they were responsible for providing for the family. In order to meet with the needs, women had to step out of their homes. The working women were exploited, some had to be unpaid servants, some had to beg on the roads and some had to sell the only thing that was left to them, and was their bodies. This information about the women of Hastinapur troubled Draupadi as she was reminded of all the terrible things happened to her in the past and how helpless and hopeless she was. Her thoughts made her realize that she needs to do something in order to eradicate the sufferings of the women. She wanted a separate court for women where they could speak about their problems without any fear. Draupadi asked Kunti and Gandhari to help her in establishing the court for women, the three women took permission from Yudhishthir and gathered all the other women of the palace including Subhadra and Uttara, only Duryodhan's wife refused to join them. The court was not enough, the women needed wealth to deal with the sufferings of the women. It was Uttara, who took the first step as she gave up her wedding jewellery, this inspired the other women as well. Soon the women market developed and flourished. Hastinapur became a city where the women could go out and work without harassment.

Abhimanyu's son Parikishat changed the lives of the Pandavas, he was able to pull them out of their gloom. All of them played their role of being a father to the fatherless child, Bheem taught him moves of wrestling, Arjun taught him archery, Nakul made him ride the horses, Sahadev taught him to how to talk to animals and Yudhishthir told him various stories. Through Parikishat, the Pandava brothers were living the life of a father, that they could not do with their own children. On the day, when he was named, Vyasa told Draupadi about the future that waited for him and advised her to watch Parikishat's temper, because his temper will only be the reason of his downfall. Upon hearing Vyasa's prediction, Draupadi focused on disciplining Parikishat. She was rebuked by every other member of the household for her excessive harshness towards the child, but she knew that this was required. Parikishat became the companion Draupadi had longed for since her childhood days. She realized that Parikishat had wisdom beyond his age, so she enjoyed the conversations they had. As the time flew, Dhritrashtra grew restless and finally decided to leave the palace life and

spent the last days of his lives in the forest. Gandhari also announced that she would accompany her husband to the forest and be with him in his last days. On the day when the old couple were leaving for their hermitage, the Pandavas realized Kunti was also leaving with them. No amount of pleading from her sons, stopped Kunti.

A royal messenger came from Dwarka and informed the Pandavas that the men of Yadu clan had died, Balaram was also dead and no one knew where Krishna was. The moment the Pandavas thought that the game of gloom was over, they received the news of the loss of their dearest Krishna. Though none of them believed that Krishna was no more, Yudhisthir asked Arjun to go to Dwarka and find out what had happened and bring the women to Hastinapur. Following Yudhisthir's orders, Arjun left, while the Pandavas waited for Arjun to return, various rumours made their way to the Pandava court. While waiting for Arjun's return, the Pandavas noticed bad omens around them, that made them realize that Krishna was truly gone. When a helpless Arjun returned to the Pandavas, then they got to know how the Yadu clan was finished, how Balaram died and how they lost their beloved Krishna. Arjun did not bring back anybody with him, as he failed to protect any of them. The Pandavas were shocked to believe that the greatest warrior of all could not save people. The news of Krishna's death brought more gloom and despondence to the Pandavas, now without him, all of them that the purpose of life was over for them and all them wanted to die.

As the Pandavas got ready to leave Hastinapur and move towards the heavenly life, Draupadi remembered the old times when she had left the city. The two times she had left the city she had experienced different set of emotions, the first time she was new bride who had dreams in her eyes, the second time when she had been humiliated in a way no women should be, she left the city promising to take a revenge for the wrong. While standing at the gate of the city Draupadi's mind betrayed her, because she suddenly did not wanted to give up the life she had in Hastinapur, she wanted to stay and enjoy the life she had. Everybody including her husbands tried to stop Draupadi from joining them in this journey but she was always a rebellious woman who got immense pleasures in breaking the boundaries that the society created for the women. The Pandavas and Draupadi reached the base of the Himalayas, wearing clothes made of tree bark. From that point they had to continue their journey without turning back, and they would have to accept the fall of their companion because the mountains would not allow the individual to travel after a point because the individuals had flaws. While moving forward, after a certain point Draupadi realised that three of her husbands had already moved forward and were very far from her. Bheem and Yudhisthir were close to her but she

could not move forward, at that point she realized that the mountains would not allow her to move forward. Draupadi's fall startled Bheem, as he could not believe that Draupadi had any kind of flaw. He wanted to come and help Draupadi, but Yudhisthir reminded him of the law of the journey where he could not go back, he had to only move forward. When Draupadi heard Bheem's voice, who was reasoning with Yudhisthir, she realized that Bheem truly loved her, she even remembered the time when he had risked his life for her. When Yudhisthir's words made their way to Draupadi, she was mad at him for following the laws over human life, at that time she allowed herself to think about Karna, who would have not left her alone. When devastated Bheem questioned Yudhisthir, about the reason behind Draupadi's fall, Yudhisthir informed that even though she married all the five brothers but she truly loved one. Upon hearing this Bheem genuinely asked Yudhisthir about the man who had occupied Draupadi's heart, at this moment Yudhisthir hesitated because he knew who was the man who was loved by Draupadi more than anybody, but for her sake he lied to Bheem and took Arjun's name and at this point she realized that both Bheem and Yudhisthir had loved her all along. Draupadi's realization made regret her anger that she projected towards her husbands when she should have truly appreciated them.

While laying on her deathbed, she thought of the people she loved her entire life. Draupadi thought of Dhairya Ma, Dhriti, her boys, Parikshit and Karna, but somehow their faces were unrecognizable. Then she thought of Krishna, and to her surprise, she not only saw him but heard his teasing voice. This voice brought her comfort, that she could not put into words. Krishna mocked her because the way she was laying, and trying to remember prayers. He teased her saying that she does not know many of them, that's why he asked her to remember the times that made her truly happy. At that point, her mind was blank, she had no thoughts at all but when Krishna rubbed his hands over her forehead. Memories flooded her mind, and Draupadi was startled to witness Krishna in all the memories that took control of her mind. These memories made her happy, and gave her a trip down the memory lane. And finally when death welcomed her she realized that it was Krishna who was there with her, even before she was born as Draupadi.

III. FEMINIST READING

The Palace of Illusions by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni stands as the best example for the feminist readings of the epics. Often when the epics are talked about, the struggles of the male warriors are highlighted. And in the process, people often tend to forget the sufferings of the women, who were there with these warriors is even greater. In the novel,

Chirita Banerjee has beautifully re-narrated the story of the Mahabharata but through the eyes of Paanchali (Draupadi), who faced many challenges throughout her life yet came out strong.

It is through Paanchali, Chirita Banerjee has talked about the various problems that are faced by women who live in a patriarchal society.

From a tender age Paanchali had questioned the things that seemed wrong to her. Like her father naming her after him, her father opposing to her desires to study Warcraft with her brother. In the novel, Chirita Banerjee has shown how the women were considered the property of the men and how Paanchali broke these norms for her own sake. This is proved, Paanchali's father arranged a swayamvar for her only to strength his power, Paanchali's consent was not taken, in fact nobody truly cared to ask what she wanted. And when she agreed to get married, she was rebuked of the choices she made. Years later, again when she was considered as a property of her husbands, she faced the men bravely. When Yudhisthir lost to Duryodhan and Draupadi had to face the consequences, as she was humiliated in a court full of men who did not bother to raise their voices against the injustice. She had to took a stand for herself, and raised the question that why she was considered a property that her husband could own and how a man could consider his wife his property when he himself was not a free man.

Chirita Banerjee has also highlighted the importance of female education and the need for the females to work. Since Draupadi was a rebellious female, she betrayed her father and seeked education. Since she was educated, she knew the laws about land and property. That's why when Yudhisthir placed her as a bet, in the game of dice, she could fight back.

After the Great War had ended, Hastinapur became a city of women. The death of the male members in the war, had brought great responsibilities for the women. The women had to go out of the house in order to provide the family, in order to do so some became unpaid servants, some started working but faced a lot of exploitation and unfortunately some had to sell their bodies in order to earn something for the family. Then Paanchali was the one who wanted to establish a separate court for women where they could share their concerns without any fear. Since Paanchali propagated this idea, she received help from other women, and together they were able to form a women market that flourished, which made Hastinapur a city where women could continue to work without harassment.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through this research, I learned that women are stronger than the credit given to them as a member of the society.

The society restricts a women in many ways, but the women have to break some restrictions in order to stand for themselves. A female can stand for herself and question the injustice done to her, only if she is educated enough to know her worth. Female education and liberation is the need of the hour. If a society fails to provide the freedom, its female members needs in order to live a life of dignity, then there is no glory of a such a misogynistic society. In a society, the women should have the choice and power to make decisions that are best for her.

This research helped me in understanding, that females need equality over anything else. The feminists working for the betterment of the females, they are not asking for female domination over men rather there are asking for a society that is free of any form of domination.

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